

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE JOHN B. LARSON
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION**

**OVERSIGHT HEARING ON
APRIL 28, 2004
THE GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE (GPO)**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for scheduling this important hearing. The last oversight hearing examining GPO issues took place in July 2002 in the Joint Committee on Printing, when our distinguished colleague Senator Mark Dayton chaired the JCP. Much has happened since then, notably the appointment of the 24th Public Printer, Mr. Bruce R. James, of Nevada. Mr. James brings to the position of Public Printer an extensive background in the private-sector printing industry. We are grateful that he is willing to serve in this unique and challenging period.

Since taking office, Mr. James has appointed a new top-management team. He has also appointed a new Inspector General, Marc Nichols, who joins him at the witness table this morning. The Public Printer has reorganized GPO's top management, and has also reduced the size of GPO's workforce by more than 10% through an initial round of employee buy-outs. He has embarked on a strategic planning process and other changes in direction. This hearing offers Mr. James an opportunity to provide this committee with a better understanding of his vision for the GPO, and offers us an opportunity to evaluate and question him about what he's doing. This is a normal and, in fact, essential component of the process, for both the Congress and the Public Printer. I trust he welcomes it as much as I do.

This hearing also offers us, and Mr. James, an opportunity to hear from others interested in these matters, including the General Accounting Office, who has been looking into GPO management-related issues at the behest of the Appropriations Committee, and three important groups with direct stakes in the success of the GPO. We, and he, will hear from organized labor, representing the hardworking men and women who, in every sense of the word, enable the Public Printer to deliver goods and services to his customers every day. We will hear from the private printing industry, a critical GPO partner that is invisible to many Americans, who do not realize that roughly 3/4 of all printing ordered through GPO is printed not in GPO's plant, but by private printers across the country.

Finally, I am especially eager to hear from the group who exemplify what all this is about and who are here to remind us why all this matters, which is America's library community and the American people they serve. Libraries and librarians in every state of this Union are the cornerstone of a system, created by Congress in 1813, during the administration of James Madison, the architect of the Constitution, and are the guardians of Americans' right to know. Librarians are here to ask that this Congress, like its predecessors, reaffirm our national commitment to the core principle enunciated in 1813, chief among them that all Americans will forever enjoy free, permanent public access to the basic information about what our government is doing. We will assure that government information is disseminated widely and available to all citizens, whether rich or poor, urban or rural, Republicans, Democrats or independents, or

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anything in between. The collection, dissemination and preservation of government information make democracy possible. In that framework, librarians will offer their views on how we and GPO can protect and improve the Federal Depository Library Program in an electronic environment, and make democracy possible in the 21st Century and beyond.

I look forward to the dialogue.

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